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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"  
"\*\*\*\*\*"

I hope that you all had a great holiday! 2007 is rapidly coming to an end - another year older, and likely not any wiser. It happens. Bit, we did have a good holiday. Lots of goodies (yep, I did get that new digital camera!) under the proverbial tree. We then went to my wife's mother's for an early dinner. All in all, a nice day.

Besides the new camera, I did get an Atari item: a Flashback console. I finally got it hooked up and actually working, but the console appears to be a little flaky. Some of the games won't load, so it's back to the store for an exchange. And I was really looking forward to playing some Asteroids and Canyon Bomber! Oh well, eventually.

Otherwise, it's been a slow week. That's typical for this time of the year. Things will pick up after the first of the year, like clockwork, literally.

Any special plans for New Year's Eve? Most likely we'll stay in like we usually do. My wife will watch some television and go to bed early. Me, I'll listen to some tunes with few drinks in tow. I'll then take a quick peek at the tube to see how old Dick Clark looks and switch back and forth to watching the celebration in Boston with the Pops. Maybe there will be some inane television series marathon showing for awhile too. A nice quiet routine!

Anyway, all of us here at A-ONE wish you all a Happy New Year. Please, unless you are celebrating like I am, please party responsibly. If you are driving, don't drink. Not a big deal!

Until next time...

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Phoenix 5.2

Hello,

I release the Version 5.2 from the database program Phoenix with source code. This version based on the code from Dieter and Jürgen

Geiß.

At the moment there is only a english resource. The docu is in german.

Gerhard

<<http://home.ewr-online.de/~gstoll/>>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
[joe@atarinews.org](mailto:joe@atarinews.org)

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, here we are at the end of another year. It's been an interesting one, and I'm not sure that I want to see it's like again for a while.

You almost certainly know this by now, but as I sit here typing this, the news is breaking that Benazir Bhutto has been killed. I'm not exactly sure that you can call it an assassination, since I think an assassination is the premeditated murder of a public official. I could be wrong about that, but suffice it to say that she's been killed.

For those of you who cannot connect the name with a person, she was a former Prime Minister of Pakistan. I won't tell you what I thought of her, because by now you've heard every possible opinion about her. Suffice it to say that I thought that she could have done some good if she'd had the time.

While reports are muddled and confused at the moment, it seems that a suicide bomber shot her and then detonated the bomb he was wearing. The toughest question to answer is going to be: Who was responsible? There will no doubt be theories swirling around like crazy for weeks or months, but I doubt we'll ever know with a high degree of certainty.

Since this is our last issue of the year, I'd like to remind everyone to celebrate responsibly. If you drive, don't drink. If you drink, don't drive. The life you save may be MINE.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup  
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Gerhard Stoll posts:

"I release Version 5.2 of the database program Phoenix with sourcecode. This version based on the code from Dieter and J^ '...rgen Gei^ ' .

At the moment there is only an english resource. The docu is in german.

<http://home.ewr-online.de/~gstoll/> "

Alexander Beuscher tells Gerhard:

"Nice gesture to give free the sources. Phoenix still is my favourite database.

I've only had a short look at the sources but does the "BASE" subdirectory contain the part that once was sold by ASH as "Phoenix Base"? "

Gerhard replies:

"Yes, a german docu can be found on my homepage."

Alexander tells Gerhard:

"I've seen that, quiet helpful for getting into it, thanks! The db interface itself is compiled into a lib file, so I think that the Geiss brothers prefer to have that "protected" to some extent."

Derryck Croker adds:

"Nice to see Dennis's work from way back finally in use. There's still some German text around, but not enough to make it unusable for any non-German readers I think."

Gerhard adds:

"Yes, the title form the dialog boxes are in german, because they will used for the hypertext. And the Alertbox also in german. If someone wants to translate it ..."

Derryck Croker tells Gerhard:

"No worries about translating those texts, but the hypertext would be well beyond me I'm afraid."

'IntelOutside' asks about installing a newer, larger hard drive in his MegaSTE:

"I've just bought an old ATARI Mega STE, 4Mbyte, but still with its original 48Mbyte HD.

I can format this old hard disk, but 48Mbyte is not much. Got a 2 Gbyte IBM SCSI drive, it fits and spins up, but the Advanced Hard Disk Utilities do report a "fatal error" when I try to install that hd.

Is 2Gbyte too much for an ATARI STE? I was told that the 2Gbyte drive is working. Do I need a better version of the hard disk tools? Are there any upgrades?"

"Gamers today have gotten used to the increasing complexity of video games," said Todd Slepian, Producer, Atari, Inc. "But it's always nice

to take a break from these monstrous titles and go back to the games that defined our childhoods. With so many fun classic games packed into such a small disc, it's hard not to crack a little smile for days gone by."

For true arcade authenticity, all 11 classic arcade titles in Atari Classics Evolved feature their original retro graphics, as well as an option for beautifully rendered "Evolved" graphics and enhanced gameplay. While retaining the tried-and-true gameplay of the original games, the 11 classic arcade titles also feature online leaderboards, allowing players to compare scores against some of the best players in the world. Some games also have local peer-to-peer wireless capability allowing players to compete in fierce local multiplayer matches.

For more information on Atari Classics Evolved, Atari and its entire product line-up please visit <http://www.atari.com>.

### "Aliens vs. Predator" Back In Deadly Sequel

The Alien and the Predator, monsters from a great science-fiction film and an above-average one, respectively, have been reduced in "Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem" to featured attractions in a dull actioner that looks like a bad video game.

The first "AVP" pairing in 2004 at least played the monster mash for camp humor. Yet this new film, which opened as counter-programming on Christmas Day, sends the space creatures and their human victims through an antediluvian small-town-under-siege plot that was so nicely satirized this year in Robert Rodriguez's "Planet Terror" portion of "Grindhouse."

"AVP" grossed \$80 million domestically but "Requiem" is unlikely to stir that kind of interest. The old A and P monsters just aren't what they used to be. Familiarity has done them in.

Consider that great signature moment from Ridley Scott's "Alien" way back in 1979, when an alien baby burst unexpectedly from a poor astronaut's gut. It was truly shocking. Weren't moviegoers supposed to have fainted? Here the directors, who bill themselves as the Brothers Strause, get to that moment right away - and then again and again and again. A great screen moment turned into to a carny sideshow.

Aliens cause a Predator spacecraft to crash near the small Colorado mountain town of Gunnison, killing the Predator pilot. Another Predator follows his pal, discovers him dead, gets all emotional, then goes on an Alien hunting trip. He certainly has many targets.

The Aliens incubate and reproduce in humans at a rapid rate so Gunnison becomes a virtual shooting gallery for the sometimes invisible Predator. Trouble is he isn't too careful about what else he hits - humans or a nuclear power plant. The town blacks out on a rainy night while the rampaging monsters devour and destroy humans left and right.

The town's sheriff (John Ortiz) is overwhelmed. In fact, he is so nuts he keeps bringing along an ex-con (Steven Pasquale), just out of prison, on all his investigations. The ex-con's younger brother (Johnny Lewis) is fighting off the town bully over a girl (Kristen Hager) but all is swiftly forgotten as the teens get dispatched one by one.

So lacking in imagination is this movie that the Brothers Strause and writer Shane Salerno keep scrambling back to the original movie for inspiration. Reiko Aylesworth's Iraq War veteran is a carbon copy of Sigourney Weaver's Ellen Ripley as she fights the monsters in skin-tight clothes with guns a-blazing to protect her daughter (Ariel Gade).

Character and dialogue are strictly rote with jaw-dropping lines occurring like Aylesworth's when someone notices that her daughter is a bit shaken, having just seen her daddy devoured by a monster, which then chased them all over town: "It hasn't been an easy night for her," her mom says. No, it hasn't.

Fights between the space fiends are tiresome affairs of zaps, gun bursts and acid blood plus a blue liquid Alien Cleanser the Predator keeps pouring everywhere to dissolve the creatures. Meanwhile, the soundtrack is filled with peculiar gurgles, crackling, hisses, clicks and electronic noise, all backed by Brian Tyler's relentless, pulsating score.

### Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

Nintendo knows best. If you thought that releasing a gaming handheld with two screens and stylus input was a bad idea, Nintendo knew better. If you thought that releasing an underpowered console with motion-control input was a weak response to Sony and Microsoft's next-gen efforts, Nintendo knew better. If you thought those motion-sensitive controllers would have weak and shaky input that would make games unplayable if they depended on fine control, Nintendo knew better. And if you thought the Wii's graphic system would ensure that every game on the system would look weak and fuzzy, Nintendo knows better. From "Wii Sports" to "Paper Mario" to "Super Mario Galaxy" to "Metroid Prime 3," Nintendo takes a system that gives every other developer fits and somehow develops first-rate entertainment for it. If Nintendo could bottle that magic and sell it to other game developers, the Wii's market share would soon be so dominant that we'd be using Xbox 360's to prop open doorways.

But I digress. The subject of the day is "Metroid Prime 3," and it is about as professional an effort as you're likely to see. If you're not a Nintendo fanboy of long standing, you may never have played a "Metroid Prime" game before, so here's some background: you play as Samus Aran, a female bounty hunter who dresses up in a big set of armor and does battle with various space antagonists in a first-person shooter environment. Like most futuristic sets of armor, you get some special powers, most prominent of which is the ability to morph into a ball that can roll around and navigate past obstacles that would block you in your full form. "Metroid Prime 3" plays like your standard shooter on rails: you get an objective and have a set of corridors or passageways to navigate in order to complete your mission, with a predictable array of baddies that will fight you along the way, and a boss battle at the end of the level to punctuate your progress.

It's not just a shooter, though. In fact, I'd go so far as to say it's not even primarily a shooter. "Metroid Prime 3" is full of puzzles: how do you open that door, how do you get the power supply back online, how do deal with obstacles that slow you down when there's a time limit, and so on. You spend far more time thinking your way past the puzzles than you do shooting stuff (and, in fact, most of the actual gun battles pose no more

than a moderate challenge). So you can think of it this way: "Metroid Prime 3" is a puzzle game, and your gun is a puzzle solver.

The game design is excellent throughout. The graphical look and polish is quite good - not next-gen good, in the sense of the visual splendor you can get on the 360 or PS3, but more than good enough for gamers today. I particularly liked the way you could see Samus' eyes faintly reflected in the visor in front of your face; that's the sort of immersive detail that just makes a game more fun. The controls are rock-solid, with none of the drunken weaving you tend to experience on other shooters that use the Wiimote for aiming. The levels are designed carefully and well, and the puzzles are just tricky enough to slow you down without making it impossible to get by without cheating or getting lucky. In short, this is the sort of quality title that makes you wonder why other developers don't make better games for the Wii. Clearly the system has everything it needs for a true AAA-quality release. Sooner or later, you have to assume that developers like EA and Ubisoft will crack the Wii code and start releasing first-rate games, and then the sky's the limit.

So remember, folks: Nintendo knows best. "Metroid Prime 3" is just the latest example of that fact.

Ratings (1-10):

Graphics: 8. Not flashy, but still quite good.

Sound: 8. Voice work is solid and professional.

Gameplay: 9. What was that again, kids? That's right - Nintendo knows best.

Story: 8. Something about space pirates. I honestly didn't care that much, but your mileage may vary.

Replayability: NA. There's enough depth here that I honestly think replayability is a non-issue.

Overall: 8.5. "Metroid Prime 3" is another excellent Nintendo game for a Nintendo system. When are the other developers going to join the party?

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -      Online Users Growl & Purr!
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## Teen Opens PlayStation 3 Box, Finds Phone Book Inside!

A Camarillo father says he bought his son a PlayStation, but when the teen opened the box, all he got was a phone book.

Imagine tearing into a holiday present to find a PlayStation 3 box... with a phone book sealed inside! That's what happened to 13-year-old Brandon Burns Christmas morning. He says he laughed about it when it happened. His



parents... not so much, since they spent \$500 for the PS3. They say they plan on taking the phone book, the box, and their receipt back to the Thousand Oaks mall store where they bought it. Good luck, guys!

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Laptop Project Enlivens Peruvian Hamlet

Doubts about whether poor, rural children really can benefit from quirky little computers evaporate as quickly as the morning dew in this hilltop Andean village, where 50 primary school children got machines from the One Laptop Per Child project six months ago.

These offspring of peasant families whose monthly earnings rarely exceed the cost of one of the \$188 laptops - people who can ill afford pencil and paper much less books - can't get enough of their "XO" laptops.

At breakfast, they're already powering up the combination library/videocam/audio recorder/music maker/drawing kits. At night, they're dozing off in front of them - if they've managed to keep older siblings from waylaying the coveted machines.

"It's really the kind of conditions that we designed for," Walter Bender, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology spinoff, said of this agrarian backwater up a precarious dirt road.

Founded in 2005 by former MIT Media Lab director Nicholas Negroponte, the One Laptop program has retreated from early boasts that developing-world governments would snap up millions of the pint-sized laptops at \$100 each.

In a backhanded tribute, One Laptop now faces homegrown competitors everywhere from Brazil to India - and a full-court press from Intel Corp.'s more power-hungry Classmate.

But no competitor approaches the XO in innovation. It is hard drive-free, runs on the Linux operating system and stretches wireless networks with "mesh" technology that lets each computer in a village relay data to the others.

Mass production began last month and Negroponte says he expects at least 1.5 million machines to be sold by next November. Even that would be far less than Negroponte originally envisioned. The higher-than-initially-advertised price and a lack of the Windows operating system, still being tested for the XO, have dissuaded many potential government buyers.

Peru made the single biggest order to date - more than 272,000 machines - in its quest to turn around a primary education system that the World

Economic Forum recently ranked last among 131 countries surveyed. Uruguay was the No. 2 buyers of the laptops, inking a contract for 100,000.

Negroponte said 150,000 more laptops will get shipped to countries including Rwanda, Mongolia, Haiti, and Afghanistan in early 2008 through "Give One, Get One," a U.S.-based promotion ending Dec. 31 in which you buy a pair of laptops for \$399 and donate one or both.

The children of Arahuaay prove One Laptop's transformative conceit: that you can revolutionize education and democratize the Internet by giving a simple, durable, power-stingy but feature-packed laptop to the worlds' poorest kids.

"Some tell me that they don't want to be like their parents, working in the fields," first-grade teacher Erica Velasco says of her pupils. She had just sent them to the Internet to seek out photos of invertebrates - animals without backbones.

Antony, 12, wants to become an accountant.

Alex, 7, aspires to be a lawyer.

Kevin, 9, wants to play trumpet.

Saida, 10, is already a promising videographer, judging from her artful recording of the town's recent Fiesta de la Virgen.

"What they work with most is the (built-in) camera. They love to record," says Maria Antonieta Mendoza, an Education Ministry psychologist studying the Arahuaay pilot to devise strategies for the big rollout when the new school year begins in March.

Before the laptops, the only cameras the kids at Santiago Apostol school saw in this population-800 hamlet arrived with tourists who visit for festivals or to see local Inca ruins.

Arahuaay's lone industry is agriculture. Surrounding fields yield avocados, mangoes, potatoes, corn, alfalfa and cherimoya.

Many adults share only weekends with their children, spending the work week in fields many hours' walk from town and relying on charities to help keep their families nourished.

When they finish school, young people tend to abandon the village.

Peru's head of educational technology, Oscar Becerra, is betting the One Laptop program can reverse this rural exodus to the squalor of Lima's shantytowns four hours away.

It's the best answer yet to "a global crisis of education" in which curricula have no relevance, he said. "If we make education pertinent, something the student enjoys, then it won't matter if the classroom's walls are straw or the students are sitting on fruit boxes."

Indeed, Arahuaay's elementary school population rose by 10 when families learned the laptop pilot was coming, said Guillermo Lazo, the school's director.

The XOs that Peru is buying will be distributed to pupils in 9,000 elementary schools from the Pacific to the Amazon basin where a single

teacher serves all grades, Becerra said.

Although Peru boasts thousands of rural satellite downlinks that provide Internet access, only about 4,000 of the schools getting XO's will be connected, said Becerra.

Negroponte says One Laptop is committed to helping Peru overcome that hurdle. Without Internet access, he believes, the program is incomplete.

Teachers will get 2 1/2 days of training on the laptops, Becerra said. Each machine will initially be loaded with about 100 copyright-free books. Where applicable, texts in native languages will be included, he added. The machines will also have a chat function that will let kids make faraway friends over the Internet.

Critics of the rollout have two key concerns.

The first is the ability of teachers - poorly trained and equipped to begin with - to cope with profoundly disruptive technology.

Eduardo Villanueva, a communications professor at Lima's Catholic University, fears "a general disruption of the educational system that will manifest itself in the students overwhelming the teachers."

To counter that fear, Becerra said the government is offering \$150 grants to qualifying teachers toward the purchase of conventional laptops, for which it is also arranging low-interest loans.

The second big concern is maintenance.

For every 100 units it will distribute to students, Peru is buying one extra for parts. But there is no tech support program. Students and teachers will have to do it.

"What you want is for the kids to do the repairs," said Negroponte, who believes such tinkering is itself a valuable lesson. "I think the kids can repair 95 percent of the laptops."

Tech support is nevertheless a serious issue in many countries, Negroponte acknowledged in a phone interview.

One Laptop is currently bidding on a contract with Brazil's government that Negroponte says demanded unrealistically onerous support requirements.

The XO machines are water resistant, rugged and designed to last five years. They have no fan so they won't suck up dust, are built to withstand drops from a meter and a half and can absorb power spikes typical of places with irregular electricity.

Mendoza, the psychologist, is overjoyed that the program stipulates that kids get ownership of the laptops.

Take Kevin, the aspiring trumpet player.

Sitting in his dirt-floor kitchen as his mother cooks lunch, he draws a soccer field on his XO, then erases it. Kevin plays a song by "Caliente," his favorite combo, that he recorded off Arahua's single TV channel. He shows a reporter photos he took of him with his 3-year-old brother.

A bare light bulb hangs by a wire from the ceiling. A hen bobs around the floor. There are no books in this two-room house. Kevin's parents didn't get past the sixth grade.

Indeed, the laptop project also has adults in its sights.

Parents in Arahuaay are asking Mendoza, the visiting psychologist, what the Internet can do for them.

Among them is Charito Arrendondo, 39, who sheds brief tears of joy when a reporter asks what the laptop belonging to ruddy-cheeked Miluska - the youngest of her six children - has meant to her. Miluska's father, it turns out, abandoned the family when she was 1.

"We never imagined having a computer," said Arrendondo, a cook.

Is she afraid to use the laptop, as is typical of many Arahuaay parents, about half of whom are illiterate?

"No, I like it. Sometimes when I'm alone and the kids are not around I turn it on and poke around."

Arrendondo likes to play checkers on the laptop.

"It's also got chess, which I sort of know," she said, pausing briefly.

"I'm going to learn."

#### Britain's Queen Elizabeth Goes Global On YouTube

Queen Elizabeth is joining the YouTube generation.

Buckingham Palace on Sunday said the 81-year-old monarch will post her traditional Christmas Day message - normally broadcast on television - on the video-sharing Web site as well this year.

At the same time, a new Royal Channel has been unveiled on YouTube, allowing Web surfers to view the queen's first Christmas broadcast in 1957, as well as other archive footage of the royal family and its events.

The catalogue is at [www.youtube.com/theroyalchannel](http://www.youtube.com/theroyalchannel).

The queen is said to be avid about using new technology to reach a wider, more diverse audience. Last year her Christmas message was released as a podcast.

In her first Christmas broadcast 50 years ago, she waxed lyrical about the advent of television.

"I very much hope that this new medium will make my Christmas message more personal and direct," she said. "That it is possible for you to see me today is just another example of the speed at which things are changing all around us."

Queen Elizabeth's message is followed closely by millions of Britons and others in Commonwealth countries worldwide on Christmas Day each year.

Buckingham Palace revealed this week the queen likes to sneak off from the rest of her family on Christmas Day and watch the recorded message alone, judging for herself how she comes across.

## AOL Pulls Plug On Netscape Web Browser

Netscape Navigator, the world's first commercial Web browser and the launch pad of the Internet boom, will be pulled off life support Feb. 1 after a 13-year run.

Its current caretakers, Time Warner Inc.'s AOL, decided to kill further development and technical support to focus on growing the company as an advertising business. Netscape's usage dwindled with Microsoft Corp.'s entry into the browser business, and Netscape all but faded away following the birth of its open-source cousin, Firefox.

"While internal groups within AOL have invested a great deal of time and energy in attempting to revive Netscape Navigator, these efforts have not been successful in gaining market share from Microsoft's Internet Explorer," Netscape Director Tom Drapeau wrote in a blog entry Friday.

In recent years, Netscape has been little more than a repackaged version of the more popular Firefox, which commands about 10 percent of the Web browser market, with almost all of the rest going to Internet Explorer.

People will still be able to download and use the Netscape browser indefinitely, but AOL will stop releasing security and other updates on Feb. 1. Drapeau recommended that the small pool of Netscape users download Firefox instead.

A separate Netscape Web portal, which has had several incarnations in recent years, will continue to operate.

The World Wide Web was but a few years old when in April 1993 a team at the University of Illinois' National Center for Supercomputing Applications released Mosaic, the first Web browser to integrate images and sound with words. Before Mosaic, access to the Internet and the Web was largely limited to text, with any graphics displayed in separate windows.

Marc Andreessen and many of his university colleagues soon left to form a company tasked with commercializing the browser. The first version of Netscape came out in late 1994.

Netscape fed the gold-rush atmosphere with a landmark initial public offering of stock in August 1995. Netscape's stock carried a then-steep IPO price of \$28 per share, a price that doubled on opening day to give the startup a \$2 billion market value even though it had only \$20 million in sales.

But Netscape's success also drew the attention of Microsoft, which quickly won market share by giving away its Internet Explorer browser for free with its flagship Windows operating system. The bundling prompted a Justice Department antitrust lawsuit and later a settlement with Microsoft.

Netscape eventually dropped fees for the software, but it was too late. Undone by IE, Netscape sold itself to AOL in a \$10 billion deal completed in early 1999.

Netscape spawned an open-source project called Mozilla, in which developers from around the world freely contribute to writing and testing the software. Mozilla released its standalone browser, Firefox, and Netscape was never able to regain its former footing.

### Using eBay To Catch A Truck Thief

On the morning of Nov. 17, Ben Adams found himself hiding beneath the retractable cover in the back of a Chevy TrailBlazer. The truck was parked in front of a warehouse in Duncanville, Texas. His friend "Sam," the TrailBlazer's owner, had just finished a test drive on a 1949 Chevy truck - the same truck Adams was certain had been stolen from him four months earlier.

Adams pulled out his mobile phone and dialed 911. "Please help me," he said. "I'm at a warehouse. There are criminals all around me."

The story of how a mild-mannered software developer from San Antonio, Texas, ended up running his own undercover sting operation against eBay fraudsters begins with a truck. And if the story has a lesson, it's the one told on Adams's blog: Don't mess with Texas, especially if it involves a truck.

Last July, Adams sold the 1949 Chevy in an eBay auction. The buyer, who called himself Derrick Colbert, appeared to be from Georgia. And when a transport company employee showed up at Adams's door with a cashier's check for US\$9,600, Adams let him load up the truck and promised to hand over the title when the check cleared.

The next day, he learned from his bank that the check was a fake.

Adams immediately contacted no fewer than 15 law enforcement organizations and eBay itself, but he also began some sleuthing of his own.

He found that the thief had made an important slip-up. While corresponding about the truck, Colbert had sent Adams an e-mail from a second eBay address, different from the one he used to purchase the truck.

By tracking the sales and purchases of Colbert's second eBay ID and contacting a Colorado dealer who had sold him a junky 1950 Chevy truck, Adams was able to track Colbert down to the South Dallas area. But he still didn't have his truck.

By now, Adams had put together a 10-page packet of information and sent it to every law enforcement agency he could think of. But police didn't seem to have much interest in working on the case, and although he had reported Colbert to eBay, that didn't get him anywhere either.

"At this point, I was kind of depressed," remembered Adams. "Every few weeks, I'd do regular eBay searches for all automobiles made between 1948 and 1952 that were within the Dallas-Fort Worth area... I even searched

in Craigslist."

And then on November 13, his luck changed.

Colbert had listed the pale blue 1950 Chevy for sale on eBay. Only it wasn't junky anymore, and it didn't look like the 1950 Chevy that Colbert had bought from the Colorado dealer a few weeks earlier. It looked just like a repainted version of Adams's 1949 truck. It had the same windows in back, the same missing gas cap, and the same yellow stain across the passenger side of the front windshield.

"It made me sick to my stomach," Adams said. He called local police, but they were skeptical. So he decided to set up a sting.

First step: fake ID. He took a tip from the thieves and bought a prepaid mobile phone in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Then using a friend's well-established eBay account, he placed a couple of bids on the truck to show that he was an interested buyer. His name became "Sam."

He didn't want to seem too eager. In fact, he didn't want to do anything to tip Colbert off. And although he thought he might be putting his life at risk, Adams called Colbert and asked to set up a Saturday morning test drive. To be sure that Adams wouldn't be recognized, a friend volunteered to play the part of "Sam" during the face-to-face meeting.

And that's how Ben Adams ended up hidden inside a Chevy TrailBlazer on a Saturday morning, calling 911. Patrol cars speeding to the scene met up with Adams and his friend about a half-mile from the warehouse and followed the amateur sleuths back to the truck.

"They probably had a two-minute window where they probably could have shut the warehouse door and hit the road," Adams said.

But the thieves didn't leave, and now Adams has his truck back. And this time he plans to keep it.

#### Info Overload Costs Economy

Think twice before you copy someone on an e-mail or hit "reply all." Such practices have made today's workers less productive, a research firm concludes.

After years of naming a product or person of the year, Basex Inc. decided to forecast "information overload" as problem of the year for 2008.

"It's too much information. It's too many interruptions. It's too much lost time," Basex chief analyst Jonathan Spira declared. "It's always too much of a good thing."

Information overload isn't exactly new, but Spira said the problem has grown as technology increases societal expectations for instantaneous response. And more information available, he said, also means more time wasted looking for the right information, whether in an old e-mail or through a search engine.

Workers get disoriented every time they stop what they are doing to reply to an e-mail or answer a follow-up phone call because they didn't reply

within minutes. Spira said workers can spend 10 to 20 times the length of the original interruption trying to get back on track.

He estimates that such disruptions cost the U.S. economy \$650 billion in 2006.

Spira has a number of recommendations: Resist the urge to immediately follow up an e-mail with an instant message or phone call. Make sure the subject line clearly reflects the topic and urgency of an e-mail. And use "reply all" sparingly.

### Storm Worm Tempts With Christmas Strip Show

The criminals behind the Storm botnet waited until the last minute, but they've finally started delivering unwanted Christmas presents.

Starting Monday, Storm-infected machines began sending out Christmas-themed spam in yet another attempt to trick victims into downloading malicious software. In this case, the site is named Merrychristmasdude.com, and the malware is a variation of the Storm Trojan horse program that has been plaguing systems around the world since January.

The e-mails contain titles such as "Find Some Christmas Tail," "Warm Up this Christmas" and "Mrs. Clause Is Out Tonight!"

One message reads "Yo, I am pretty sure this is up your alley, from the things you have told me before. This will be the best 2 min you spend this holiday. hehe."

Once the user clicks on the link to Merrychristmasdude.com, he is taken to a Christmas-themed Web site with photos of scantily clad women and offered a free download. That download is a malicious program, called Email-Worm.Win32.Zhelatin.pd by F-Secure, that connects to a P-to-P (peer-to-peer) network and begins downloading even more malware.

Storm's creators have built up networks of infected PCs - called botnets - over the past year by using a combination of sophisticated hacking tricks to avoid detection and by spamming potential victims with clever and timely e-mail messages. The network is called Storm because its original messages offered victims video of the deadly storms that battered Europe a year ago, but has also perfected the tactic of sending out holiday-themed messages.

Security experts estimate that the Storm has infected more than 15 million computers over the past year, although the current size of the network is much smaller than that.

This latest variant is being blocked by some antivirus vendors, including Kaspersky, Microsoft and Symantec, according to a technical write-up of the Christmas outbreak.

The SANS Internet Storm Center recommends that administrators block Web and e-mail access to the Merrychristmasdude.com domain.



## Hackers Take Aim At Mac OS X

The Story: It's not often that an analyst covering computer security issues tells you that he doesn't do much to protect his systems. But one reputable analyst I know said just that as we talked about the rising threat of malware aimed at Apple's hardware. I won't mention his name, but the gentleman is dead wrong. The days when you can assume that Apple's products are exempt from harm are over.

Is it time to panic? No, actual attacks against Macs and the rest of the Apple family, such as the iPhone, are still rare. But as the platform becomes more and more popular, hackers are gearing up to do damage. You'd better protect yourself.

'Most Mac users take security too lightly. In fact, most are quite proud of the fact that they don't run any security at all,' says IDC analyst Chris Christiansen. 'That's an open door; at some point it will be exploited,' he says.

First some numbers: In 2006, the National Institute of Standards and Testing (NIST) tabulated 106 'vulnerabilities' in Apple's Mac OS X. (It defines vulnerabilities as a weakness in the code that could be exploited to perform unauthorized, and generally harmful, functions by the application.) In the first six months of 2007 there were 78 vulnerabilities found in Mac OS X. Windows XP (all flavors), meanwhile, had 55 vulnerabilities in 2006 and 19 in the first six months of 2007. Vista, which wasn't available in 2006, chalked up 19 vulnerabilities in 2007.

In a sense, Apple is a victim of its own success. Savvy hackers read the same stories and watch the same television programs as the rest of us, and so they are very aware of the burgeoning popularity of Apple's products. Hacking Windows still provides a lot more bang per bug than attacks on Apple, but the smaller rival is a more satisfying target than ever before. And the company's deserved reputation for building good products has probably made users overconfident.

'Apple has better commercials, but the Mac is no harder to break into than a Windows PC,' says Gartner security analyst John Pescatore. What's more, most IT shops can automatically patch large numbers of PCs at the same time, while Macs generally have to be patched one at a time, he said.

The Bottom Line: Actual attacks on the Mac platform are still unusual. But as it becomes a juicier target, that will change. Why take a chance? Give a lot more thought to securing your Macs this year.

Complete list of 2007 underreported stories: 1.xx Java is becoming the new Cobol 2.xx Sun Microsystems is back in the game 3.xx Hackers take aim at Mac OS X 4.xx There are some threats you can worry less about 5.xx Companies may have found a way around H-1B visa limits 6.xx Open source's new commercial strategy 7.xx End-to-end Ethernet finally arrives 8.xx Blade servers arrive for the masses 9.xx BI is dead; long live BI 10. Balance of power shifts to software buyers

Jennifer Gooch's mission was to create a simple Web site where people could go to find their lost gloves. Even if no happy reunions ever took place, she was just content to spread a little goodwill.

But just a month since <http://www.onecoldhand.com> went live, the Carnegie Mellon University art student is busier than ever. She's reunited four gloves with their owners, is working on similar sites for cities around the globe, and is planning a book to showcase her found gloves.

The first glove match was made about a week ago, when a CMU intern from Germany heard about the site and checked it out for her missing beige glove. She found it on the page, under the description "woman's leather glove with bling."

Sarah Altmeyer said she bought the gloves a few years ago in Germany, but later lost one at Carnegie Mellon's Simon-Newell Hall. She heard about the Web site Gooch created and thought she'd check it out.

Much to her joy, she found the missing glove there. "It was a very popular glove. I was actually kind of happy it was our first reunion," Gooch said.

Gooch's Web site got 55,000 hits in the 10 days after stories about her project ran all over the world.

"It's been amazing. Once the surprise kind of waned, I realized that it's something a lot of people can relate to, and for different reasons," Gooch said.

More than a dozen businesses and other offices in Pittsburgh now have drop boxes where lost gloves can be placed. Gooch gathers the gloves, photographs them and displays the picture on her Web site with information about where the glove was found.

Gooch's site has grown from 21 gloves to a collection of 75. A site started soon after, <http://www.onecoldhand-nyc.com>, had three gloves posted online as of Thursday. Sites are also planned for Manitoba, Milan and Philadelphia after Gooch was contacted by strangers who wanted to spearhead similar efforts in their cities.

At the end of April, Gooch plans an art show with the photos of her gloves, along with an accompanying book.

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